
The US Capital, Washington DC, is trying to combat a growing epidemic of HIV / Aids that's affecting 3% of the city's population. The rate of infection is the highest in the United States and higher than a number of African nations. From Washington Jonathan Beale reports:

Washington's HIV / Aids problem is getting worse, not better. There's been a **20% increase in cases** in the past two years. The city's department of health says that 3% of its residents over the age of twelve are now living with HIV / Aids. That's a **rate** that officials say is **on a par with** Uganda and parts of Kenya. The United Nations' definition of **an epidemic** is when it affects more than 1% of the population.

In Washington the majority of those infected are African American. Men aged between 40 and 50 have been **the hardest hit**.

The city is discussing ways of **tackling** the problem **with an emphasis on** more testing. But Washington's Mayor Adrian Fenty says that so far the message **appears to be going in one ear and out the other**.

Three ways of transmission appear to be **fuelling the spread of the virus**: men having sex with men, heterosexual sex and infection through drug use.

Jonathan Beale, BBC News, Washington

Vocabulary and definitions

a 20% increase in cases	Here, 20% more people affected by and diagnosed with HIV / Aids
rate	the speed at which something happens, or the number of times that something happens
on a par with	comparable with, similar to
an epidemic	when a particular disease affects a large number of people at the same time
the hardest hit	the most affected (in a negative way)
tackling	dealing with, solving
with an emphasis on	specifically encouraging / calling for
appears to be going in one ear and out the other	does not seem to be taken seriously enough to have an effect; seems to be ignored
fuelling the spread of the virus	causing the epidemic to grow

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